

it discharges if it offer such a precognition as lays upon us the duty of farther entertaining it.

39. For, after having traversed the field of Natural Theology and come to the ulterior margin of it, it will be found that though ignorant of all which is before us in Christianity, there will still be the same moving force carrying us forward to its investigations, as that which now makes it morally imperative upon us to prosecute the inquiry after God. If it be morally incumbent on us now to follow out the faintest incipient notices of a Deity, it will be equally incumbent on us then to follow out the same notices of a profest, if at all a likely messenger from the sanctuary of His special dwelling-place. Now this is precisely what we shall come within sight of, after having finished the lessons of natural theism. There will then be offered to our observation a certain historical personage—bearing at least such a creditable aspect and such verisimilitude of a divine commission, that we cannot without violence to the ethical principles of the subject bid it away from our mind by an act of summary rejection. In the revealed, as well as in the natural religion, there is a *prima facie* evidence which, if not amounting to a claim on our belief, at least amounts to a claim on our attention. There may not *instantly* be put into our hands the materials of a valid proof, so as to challenge all at once from us a favourable verdict. But there will at least be put into our hands the materials of a valid precognition so as to challenge from us a fair trial. It may not announce itself; and what question whether in science or in history ever does so?